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Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers
May 15, 2007

Michigan News

Intrastate Identification Requirements for Michigan Trucks

All intrastate carriers and operators of commercial motor vehicles must obtain a USDOT number. There is no cost to obtain a USDOT number. This is a free service. Officers from the Michigan State Police will begin enforcing the USDOT number requirements beginning January 1, 2008. At that time all intastate carriers/owners must have an assigned USDOT number and have the number available upon request. For more information on this requirement please link to: http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3536---,00.html or call the Michigan State Police Traffic Safety Division toll-free at (888) 464-8736.

Latest Traffic Safety News

Seat Belt Use Has Risen, but Not Everyone Gets the Message

The national "Click It or Ticket" mobilization will run from May 21 to June 3 with the goal to reduce fatalities and injuries by enforcing seat-belt laws. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that 7,000 people are killed and 100,000 are injured each year because they fail to buckle up. Seat belts are credited with saving 100,000 lives from 1982 to 2002. The national use rate has risen from 14 percent in the late 1970s to 84.2 percent today, but some people, such as New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine, still don't buckle up and pay the price with serious injuries and even death. According to NHTSA, 62 percent of SUV rollover deaths are attributable to failure to use seat belts. For more information on what you can do as an employer for your workforce during the Click it or Ticket mobilization, please link to: http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.ce4a601cdfe97fc239d17110cba046a0/
Source: The Washington Post via Detroit News, April 28, 2007

On-board Camera Systems Capture Risky Driving Behavior

Over 90% of preventable collisions are due to one root cause: the driver. Many fleets are struggling with costs around the lack of management systems for their drivers. Today's challenge is to somehow get your fleet's drivers to simply slow down, pay attention and moderate their driving. SmartDrive on board camera systems capture risky driving behavior based on unusual vehicle activity (swerving, braking, etc). The camera records 15 seconds before and after experiencing a high-level G-force; dual lenses capture not only what's in front of the vehicle, but what's going on inside, including what the driver was doing prior to the event. For more information link to: www.smartdrive.net

Older Drivers Becoming a Bigger Problem on the Road

As drivers age, they are expected to be at fault in more fatal traffic crashes. By 2030, baby boomers ages 65 and up will be responsible for a quarter of fatal crashes; that age group now is responsible for 11 percent. Making older drivers renew their licenses in person is the only scientifically proven way to reduce these rates, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Most states require eye exams but don't test for cognitive ability or put a cap on driving age. Older drivers' diminished flexibility, reflexes, memory and certain medications help contribute to crashes. Most elderly drivers make the decision to stop driving on their own. An IIHS study found that 20 percent of drivers 80 and

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older decided to stop driving because they feared they couldn't pass a vision test. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-05-02-older-drivers-usat1a_N.htm
Source: USA Today, May 2, 2007

Written, Road Tests for Older Drivers Suspended in D.C.

After criticism of a policy mandating road and written tests for drivers age 75 and older, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty suspended the requirements imposed about a year ago. Testing still will be conducted in cases where there are concerns. Anyone in Maryland and Virginia can alert officials when they're concerned about a driver's conditions. A medical panel can then review the case and revoke or restrict the driver's privileges.

Sophisticated Technology to Prevent Crashes, Theft

The future of automotive safety will bring advancements far more sophisticated than the seat belt. Infrared night vision systems will illuminate animals in the road. Adaptive air bags will inflate based on the passenger's size and position. Active head restraints will reduce injury in a crash, and telematics such as GM's OnStar can send help after the collision. Engine immobilizers can help prevent theft, telematics can report a theft if it occurs, and electronic keys can be reprogrammed to render stolen keys useless. Brakes that allow drivers to steer around an object while applying pressure and slowing will help prevent crashes, as will cars that can apply brakes to individual wheels. Bumper-mounted cameras give drivers a good view of what's behind them as they back up, while front sensors beep if a driver is coming upon an object too quickly. Nissan's Around View Monitors (AVM) help reduce blind spots when parking, and Lane Departure Prevention (LDP) attaches a small camera to the windshield and alerts drivers when they drift into another lane. Adaptive cruise control could lead to "trains" of cars set for a certain speed in a designated lane. For more information, go to http://www.shns.com/shns/g_index2.cfm?action=detail&pk=AUTOS-05-10-07
Source: Scripps Howard News Service, May 10, 2007

Truckers in Oregon Fail 10 Percent of Drug Tests

During Oregon's "Operation Trucker Check" 10 percent of truckers failed drug tests. The most common drugs detected were marijuana, methamphetamines and opiates, though some of them could have been legal prescription drugs. Both marijuana and meth were found to be higher than in 1998 and 1999. "It's a problem bigger than enforcement and state police," said an Oregon State Police sergeant. "It needs to be looked at by the transportation community as a whole." Truckers must submit to drug tests before they're employed or after a crash, but random tests are not mandatory.
Source: Oregon Statesman-Journal, May 3, 2007

Navigation Becomes New Growth Area for Cell Phone Industry

Cell phone makers are setting their sights on navigation, a market that is expected to grow by about two-thirds from last year. Phones will make up 85 percent of that market, worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Nokia began selling its first navigation phone for $749 a month ago. Some of the navigation phones will use GPS technology so users can find routes and nearby restaurants even when they're not connected to the operators' networks. Competitors include Google, Yahoo and car navigation firms. For more information, go to http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18437488/
Source: Reuters, May 2, 2007

Drunk Driving Still a Problem Despite Stricter Penalties

Threat of punishment doesn't keep people from drinking and driving, according to a University of Florida study. Researchers compared changes in drunk driving laws from 1976 to 2002 to corresponding arrest rates and alcohol-related fatal crashes and found that stricter regulations did not lower the number of drunk driving arrests. In 2005, more than 16,000 people died in alcohol-related

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crashes, and more than 1.4 million people were arrested for driving under the influence. Part of the problem is psychological—if arrested, the drunk driver doesn't start to see the consequences for a while, and many people have been able to drink and drive multiple times before getting caught. Social factors, such as peer pressure, also contribute to the problem, but more research must be done to find out why offenders drink and drive. Researchers found that immediate license suspensions and sobriety checkpoints are effective measures. Source: U-WIRE, May 1, 2007

Automakers Add Air Bags as Demand for Safety Increases

To meet consumers' demand for safer vehicles, automakers are placing air bags under cushions, in the back seat and under the dashboard. Many new models will have as many as eight to 10 air bags. "There's definitely a war between the different manufacturers to see who can add the most safety advances and air bags," a Hyundai spokesman said. By 2009 all vehicles will have side air bags, and by 2010 or later, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration will likely require side air bags to protect the head and torso. Autoliv predicts the air bag market will reach 100.4 million in 2012, about double the 2006 sales. Advances such as safety vents and biometric readers that adjust for each passenger are helping make air bags even safer; some automakers are testing air bags that deploy on the outside to protect pedestrians. Source: Detroit News, May 3, 2007

Consumers Can Check Used Cars' Air Bag Histories Online

Because scam artists are swapping out deployed air bags with non-working units in about one in 25 previously damaged vehicles, Carfax is making air bag deployment information available for free. "Do not assume your car's air bags will deploy when you need them, because most victims of this scam may never know until it's too late," Carfax's communications director said. Customers who have information about previously deployed air bags are encouraged to contact Carfax so it can update the database. To use the air bag check, go to www.carfax.com/airbag.

New Anti-Drunk Driving Stickers in Delaware are a Take on Travel Trend

The Delaware Office of Highway Safety developed new "No DUI" stickers as part of public information efforts surrounding the state's drunk driving enforcement programs. The white ovals, meant to resemble tourism stickers, feature the initials DUI with a diagonal line through them. The office printed 25,000 of the stickers for free distribution to law enforcement agencies. The agencies will hand them out to the public at safety events and affix them to their patrol vehicles. For more information, go to http://www.delawareonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070506/NEWS/705060337/-1/NEWS01
Source: The News Journal, May 6, 2007

States Consider Laws to Replace Roadside Memorials

More states are looking to create official signs warning about dangerous driving behaviors to replace homemade roadside memorials. Illinois is considering "Don't Drink and Drive" signs that would include victims' names and stay up for two years. Georgia, Washington, California, Alaska, Colorado and Oregon have laws allowing official signs for drunk-driving victims. Oregon is also looking into a "Share the Road" sign in memory of bicycle riders or pedestrians. Some states put up memorial signs for any crash victim, and 16 states declare homemade signs illegal. For more information, go to http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-05-02-memorials-signs_N.htm
Source: USA Today, May 2, 2007

Other States Might Look to California for Drunk Driving Countermeasures

California looks to be the leader in curbing drunk driving. A study ordered by Congress found that in 2005, California's rate of alcohol-related fatalities for every 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 0.52, compared to Florida's 0.73, Missouri's 0.75 and South Carolina's 0.95. California has made it easier for cities to apply for federal funding for anti-drunk driving programs, used crash data to identify

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problem locations and coordinated weekend sobriety checkpoints. Congress might add incentives in the next transportation bill for other states to adopt these measures.
Source: Automotive Fleet, May 11, 2007

News from the USDOT

Government Looks for New Solutions To Ease Congestion

Los Angeles is seen as the ultimate commuting nightmare, but as more people start living farther from work, driving in cities such as Minneapolis and Atlanta could become as bad as present-day L.A. More than 30 million people are "extreme commuters" who drive 90 minutes or more to work, so cities are looking to technology, increased tolls and public transportation to combat congestion. Population growth is expected to surpass highway capacity. Some experts aren't sure public transportation will help relieve extreme traffic, because ridership is so low. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced a plan to work with cities to charge "cordon tolls" based on how crowded a road is at a given time. In other areas, drivers can pay a fee for the privilege of driving in designated HOT (high occupancy travel) lanes. The USDOT also encourages states to look for private financing for roads. Technology that senses traffic flow and adjusts traffic signals accordingly could help ease gridlock. For more information, go to http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/070429/7gridlock.htm.
Source: US News & World Report, April 29, 2007

Work-Home

Insurance Company Offers Kits about Teen Driving

Allstate Insurance Company, in cooperation with Discovery Education, developed Drive it Right, Talking to teens about safe driving kits and sent them to 19,000 high schools across the United States at the end of April. The kits include educator resource materials, a poster and a video. National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS) members can obtain a free copy of the kit by sending an e-mail to Sandy Spavone at sspavone@noys.org and describing how you intend to use the resource. Materials can also be downloaded from http://allstate.discoveryeducation.com/index.cfm

Parent Involvement in Novice Teen Driving: Rationale, Evidence of Effects, and Potential for Enhancing Graduated Driver Licensing Effectiveness

Motor-vehicle crash rates are highly elevated immediately after licensure and then decline gradually over a period of years. Young age, risk taking, and inexperience contribute to the problem, but inexperience is particularly important early on. Driving is like other complex, skilled behaviors in which subtle improvements in perception and judgment develop gradually over a period of years. After all, safe driving is more a matter of attention and perception than physical management of the vehicle. Inexperience is particularly linked to driving performance and safety outcomes under certain driving conditions, with driving at night and with teen passengers as the most important cases. Surprisingly, driving outcomes do not appear to be affected by the pre-license training or supervised practice driving. Given the limits of training, safety effects can best be achieved by countermeasures that delay licensure or limit novice teen driving under high risk driving conditions while novices gain experience and develop safety competence. The two complementary approaches of Graduated Driver Licensing policies and parent management have been shown to provide safety effects by limiting the driving conditions of novice teenagers.
Journal Article Abstract: Simons-Morton B. J Safety Res 2007; 38(2): 193-202.
Source: SafetyLit, May 14, 2007

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Progress in Teenage Crash Risk During the Last Decade

The purpose of the present study was to examine the most recent data on teenagers' fatal and nonfatal crashes in the United States to determine current crash rates as well as changes in crash rates during the past decade. Data for calendar years 1996 and 2005 were extracted for fatal crashes from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and for police-reported crashes from the National Automotive Sampling System/General Estimates System. To calculate crash rates, population data were obtained from the Census Bureau, and mileage data were obtained from the 2001 National Household Travel Survey. During 2001-02, the latest year for which mileage data are available, 16 year-old drivers had higher fatal and nonfatal crash rates per mile traveled than all but the very oldest drivers. However, fewer 16 year-olds typically are licensed to drive and they drive fewer miles per year than all but the oldest drivers. Thus, their fatal and nonfatal crash rates per population in 2005 were lower than among other teenagers and among drivers 20-29. During the past decade the most progress has been made in reducing crashes among the youngest drivers. Between 1996 and 2005 both fatal and police-reported crashes per population declined about 40% for 16 year-old drivers, compared with about 25% for 17 year-old drivers and 15-19% for 18 year-old drivers. The greatest reductions for 16 year-olds occurred in nighttime crashes, alcohol-related fatal crashes, and fatal crashes involving multiple teenage passengers. Substantial progress has been made in reducing fatal and nonfatal crashes per population among 16 year-old drivers. Although this study was not designed to examine the role of graduated licensing, the results are consistent with the increased presence of such laws, many of which restrict nighttime driving and driving with teenage passengers. Restrictions on nighttime driving and driving with teenage passengers should be made a part of all states' graduated licensing systems. Historically, 16 year-olds have had the highest crash risk per licensed driver and per mile traveled. Given the dramatic reductions in per population crash rates among 16 year-olds, it is possible that their per mile and per licensed driver rates also have declined and may no longer be as elevated relative to other ages. However, shortcomings in the licensed driver data and a lack of recent mileage data hamper our ability to examine these issues. If we are to continue to provide a yardstick against which we can measure progress among the youngest drivers, immediate steps need to be taken to restore the availability of reliable exposure data.

Journal Article Abstract: Ferguson SA, Teoh ER, McCartt AT. J Safety Res 2007; 38(2): 137-45.
Source: SafetyLit, May 14, 2007

Technology and Teen Drivers

The rapid evolution of computing, communication, and sensor technology is likely to affect young drivers more than others. The distraction potential of infotainment technology stresses the same vulnerabilities that already lead young drivers to crash more frequently than other drivers. Cell phones, text messaging, MP3 players, and other nomadic devices all present a threat because young drivers may lack the spare attentional capacity for vehicle control and the ability to anticipate and manage hazards. Moreover, young drivers are likely to be the first and most aggressive users of new technology. Fortunately, emerging technology can also support safe driving. Electronic stability control, collision avoidance systems, intelligent speed adaptation, and vehicle tracking systems can all help mitigate the threats to young drivers. However, technology alone is unlikely to make young drivers safer. One promising approach to tailoring technology to teen drivers is to extend proven methods for enhancing young driver safety. The success of graduated drivers license programs (GDL) and the impressive safety benefit of supervised driving suggest ways of tailoring technology to the needs of young drivers. To anticipate the effects of technology on teen driving it may be useful to draw an analogy between the effects of passengers and the effects of technology. Technology can act as a teen passenger and undermine safety or it can act as an adult passenger and enhance safety. Impact on industry: Rapidly developing technology may have particularly large effects on teen drivers. To maximize the positive effects and minimize the negative effects will require a broad range of industries to work together. Ideally, vehicle manufacturers would work with infotainment providers, insurance

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companies, and policy makers to craft new technologies so that they accommodate the needs of young drivers. Without such collaboration young drivers will face even greater challenges to their safety as new technologies emerge.
Journal Article Abstract: Lee JD. J Safety Res 2007; 38(2): 203-13.
Source: SafetyLit, May 14, 2007

International Traffic Safety News

Study Finds That Drowsy Driving is Like Drunk Driving

Volvo researchers have found that the effects of drowsy driving are very similar to the effects of drunk driving. Like alcohol, fatigue impairs coordination, motor skills, response times and cognitive ability. If fewer people drove while drowsy, traffic fatalities in Europe could be reduced significantly. Researchers studied both drivers under the influence and drowsy drivers by fitting cameras above the trucks' instrument panels and watching eye movements and reactions. Both groups exhibited many of the same traits. "This is knowledge that we need for our ongoing development of methods to sound the alert in time—before accidents occur," a Volvo Trucks safety manager said.

Company Found At Fault for Drowsy-Driving Crash

A British company could pay up to £1 million in damages for encouraging a culture of long hours that led to a crash in which one of its employees was paralyzed. The kitchen fitter had worked for 19 hours at his boss' request before falling asleep at the wheel and crashing. His reward will be reduced by a third because he did not wear a seat belt and knew he was at risk of falling asleep. The worker was also on his cell phone at the time of the crash, but judges decided fatigue was more to blame. "This case is a tragic reminder to employers of the need to manage occupational road risk," a traffic safety professional said. "Companies need to be sure that their employees are in a fit condition to drive and have had adequate quality sleep before getting behind the wheel."

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